

Info Handling
Study, EXC 9M

21 NOV 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Administration
Deputy Director, National Foreign Assessment Center
Deputy Director for Operations
Deputy Director for Science & Technology
Administrative Officer, DCI Area

FROM : James B. Taylor
Comptroller

SUBJECT : Information Handling Study

STAT 1. [] At the Director's June conference on goals the DDA submitted a proposal for developing a better structure for coordinating and carrying out the Agency's information handling activities. At the Director's September conference the goal was resubmitted jointly by the DDA and the Comptroller, revised as follows:

Goal 1: Develop a comprehensive information handling strategy for the Agency and a structure for more formal, continuing coordination of the Agency's ADP, communications, records management, and word processing activities.

The reasons for developing a "comprehensive information handling strategy" are numerous. The attached paper entitled Information Management in CIA was an integral part of the goal package discussed in September and addresses some of them. In addition, we believe that some components are having difficulties trying to plan future information handling programs in the absence of a cohesive, Agencywide plan. For all of these reasons, senior managers have agreed on the need for a comprehensive review of Agency information handling activities.

STAT 2. [] The approach recommended in September was to hire "the best possible outside management or consulting firm" to formulate recommendations for Agency consideration. Further discussion of this goal since September has led to the conclusion that as a first step, a comprehensive, if generalized, statement of the task should be developed and submitted to the EAG for discussion and restatement as necessary. Once we have agreement on the task, we can select a senior officer to direct the project, prepare a formal statement of work, select a suitable contractor, and initiate the study.

STAT 3. [] To ensure that the tasking statement which goes to the EAG is as comprehensive and thoughtful as possible, we are soliciting

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input from all Agency components. What information handling and management issues would you expect to be included in a statement presented to senior Agency management? We would like your responses to address at least the following:

(a) How, for management purposes, should we define information handling? So many define it so differently that we need to develop a composite definition.

(b) What are your major problems in handling information that presently affect or will in the future affect the performance of your component and/or other Agency components?

(c) What are the Agencywide management issues in information handling that you believe need attention in this study (e.g., planning, utilization of technology, internal organizational relationships, others)?

(d) What programs, now underway or being planned, do you think have a bearing on these issues and therefore need to be addressed in this study?

STAT 4. I would like to have your responses to this request by 15 December. While I leave to your discretion the structure of your response, I believe it would be helpful if the comments of your individual components could be made available to us. We need as broad a response to this issue as possible if we are to develop a meaningful and complete tasking statement. Presentation to the EAG will be scheduled for early 1979.

James H. Taylor

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Attachment: As Stated

The Executive Advisory Group has given considerable attention to the problem of managing the automatic data processing activities of CIA, recognizing the need for careful control over the growth of this expensive resource. It is becoming increasingly apparent, however, that to control ADP is to control only one element in a family of activities, all of which involve the handling of information.

CIA collects, transmits, stores, retrieves, shares, collates, transforms, produces and publishes information in bewildering profusion. To facilitate these multiple processes we have developed highly sophisticated and costly communications and ADP systems, related in various ways to our printing and publication facilities and to the pervasive records management processes through which we identify and safeguard the information we need to accomplish our intelligence tasks.

These various information handling tools are highly interdependent. Computer data flows on communications lines; communicated messages come to rest in computer data banks; computerized records are converted to microfilm and microfiche; filmed and paper records are scanned electronically for communication to remote display terminals; word-processing techniques expand the computer data base or feed computerized text-editing and printing processes, etc., etc. A management program to control a single element in this family of activities will be frustrated by the ways in which decisions made in another area can generate new, unprogrammed increases in workload. An awareness by the managers of the larger information service components of the need for coordination has protected us from major problems to date, but a new element is entering the picture, threatening organizational loss of control.

The emerging, as yet ill-defined techniques of "word processing," are beginning to place in the hands of individual officers or units the capacity to handle their information far more effectively and efficiently. This new localized word processing power is accompanied, however, by the ability to generate new and unanticipated demands on the central ADP and communication systems, and it threatens to have dramatic impact on our records management programs. The Information Systems Analysis Staff in the O/DDA is attempting to measure the costs and benefits of these new techniques, but is finding that without the ADP and communication factors, the analysis of word processing lacks significance. There are, to be sure, "stand-alone" word processors, but the advantages of interconnection are enticing and easily obtained in today's market, and the use of computer terminals as word processors (using software packages like SCRIPT) has the potential for uncontrolled growth.

The new Office of Community Information Systems (OCIS) will apparently be looking at some of these problems as they relate to the Intelligence Community. CIA has no counterpart to OCIS, no single voice speaking knowledgeably about the way information is or should be managed in the Agency. Indeed, as is noted at budget defense time every year, CIA does not even have one focal point for all its ADP effort. The Director of Data Processing manages and can speak for only about half of the Agency's ADP resources.

One of the three DDA management goals for 1978, along with the search for greater effectiveness and proficiency, was the enhancement of information management. As we attempt to achieve this goal, we are continually reminded of the fact that in CIA the sharing of information and information-handling facilities makes a one-directorate approach to this problem ineffective. We need a mechanism to plan and coordinate our information-handling activities on an Agency-wide basis.

1. This recommended approach is submitted in concert with the Comptroller.

2. Additional thought and discussion has been given this matter since the goal was first submitted for consideration in June. That consideration has led to a series of both negative and positive conclusions. The negative conclusions are:

a. The somewhat traditional and conventional Agency approach of appointing an inter-directorate staff study group reporting to EAG is insufficient for the cause.

b. The magnitude of the problem, availability of qualified Agency personnel to study it full-time, and the need to capitalize on the best experience and technology available preclude an exclusive in-house attach.

c. The presence of biases, subconscious or otherwise, amongst Agency personnel would inhibit the development of the most objective considerations to meet the problem.

The positive conclusions arrived at are:

a. The problem is real, is here, and a failure to study and attack it now will only exacerbate a solution at a later date.

b. The attack on the problem should not be undertaken unless we are absolutely committed to solve it.

c. The implementation to the solution to the problem may well involve a major, if not drastic, realignment of operating components in this Agency, with the most dramatic possibility being the creation of a new directorate. If we are not prepared to accept and seriously discuss drastic remedies, we should not undertake the exercise.

d. A project director from the Agency, backed up by an Agency steering committee, should be appointed. The major study and formulation of recommendations, however, should be done by the best possible outside management or consulting firm that we can select. This firm should have a demonstrated record in attacking and successfully recommending solutions to some counterpart problems.

e. The study will not be inexpensive and should not be forced to meet an unreasonable time frame.

3. If all of the above stipulations are accepted, an initial implementing step, working within the constraints established above, would be to appoint the project manager and steering group to develop and operating plan of attack, to include a statement of the problem.